

**BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS
SPECIAL MEETING**

**Park and Recreation Department
Conference Room, 11th Floor, City Hall
Monday, July 26, 2004
3:30 p.m.**

Present: Bob Aldrich, June Bailey, Dennis Brunner, Glen Dey, Janet Miller

Absent: Colleen Craig, Bobbie Harris

Also Present: Sharon Fearey - City Councilwoman; Debra Foster, David Franks, Allison Hamm and Carol Schlicher – GreenWay Alliance; Lucy Burnett and M.S. Mitchell - Riverside Citizens Association; John Stevens – Schweiter East Neighborhood Association; Ellie Skokan – WSU; and David Warren - Director of Water and Sewer; Rob Younkin – Public Works Engineering; and Doug Kupper, Tim Martz and Maryann Crockett (staff)

President Bailey called the meeting to order at approximately 3:30 p.m.

1. **Discussion of Proposed Southwest Sewage Treatment Plant**. Director Kupper commented that the purpose of the special meeting was to discuss the possibility of using parkland for a new sewage treatment plant that would serve a large area on the southwest side of Wichita. He introduced David Warren, Director of Water and Sewer.

Mr. Warren began his presentation by referring board members to a power point presentation outlining the background on the project up to and including current project status. He stated that in 2000 the City undertook a “Sewer Master Plan” evaluation and update which projected sewer service areas and needs for the City for the next ten and thirty years. He said the plan studied service options such as construction of new interceptor sewers and sewage treatment facilities. He said the outcome of the study was that the City decided to construct four new satellite sewage treatment plants, which were mostly automated. He said the first to be constructed was the Cowskin Creek facility located at 135th Street West and 37th Street North.

Mr. Warren stated that several reasons satellite plants were selected was that current infrastructure was aging and costly to upgrade, in addition to construction activities being very disruptive to current operations, and travel time in long sewer interceptors creates odor and treatability problems. He specifically mentioned that odor has been a continuing problem at the South sewage treatment plant. He continued by stating that the new technology makes unmanned operation of satellite facilities feasible. He said the Cowskin Creek plant has a small maintenance and operation staff to monitor operations at the facility, which also provides flexibility of plant operations and the capacity to adjust to development needs quickly and efficiently. He concluded by stating that satellite facilities also lend themselves to re-use opportunities for treated wastewater.

Mr. Warren stated that a Site Evaluation Committee was appointed, consisting of members appointed from various city departments (including Park, Public Works, Planning and Water and Sewer) and

citizens from District Advisory Board (DAB) IV. He said the committee held five workshops to study site criteria such as location relative to the drainage basin; separation from residences (he commented that the requirement was 1,000 feet); natural screening (topography and trees); and potential for expansion and development. He said the committee evaluated whether any of the proposed sites could be developed in the future for commercial, residential, industrial or other purposes that would add to the tax roles and benefit the City and the public at large. He said other criteria included additional costs to develop the site; ability to service future development; and permitting issues. He said permitting issues included review and approval by various government agencies and city staff. He said that included Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) approval of any proposed location on airport property; review and approval by the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) on environmental concerns; review by the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks (KDWP); and review by other agencies on archeological issues and other relevant items.

Mr. Warren mentioned that public hearings would be held with area residents and other concerned citizens and agencies to discuss facility construction and design. He referred to a map, which showed sixteen sites originally considered by the committee. He stated that as part of the process, the selection committee physically visited each of the proposed sites. He said several sites were eliminated because the FAA considered them within "approach patterns" or "crash zones". In addition, he said some sites were more favorable than others due to topography and their location relative to the drainage basin. He commented that four of the final sites (#1, #2, #5 and #7) were located within Pawnee Prairie Park. Responding to questions, Mr. Warren stated that twenty acres would be required for construction of the sewage treatment facility and that the building footprint was ten acres. He added that site #1 consisted of approximately forty acres.

Aldrich requested information on site #3, which was not parkland. Mr. Warren stated that site #3 was on higher ground, which would require that sewage be pumped up hill and that the site did not have very good screening. He commented that it would probably be more expensive to locate the treatment facility at the site. Aldrich asked what was the next step in the process. Mr. Warren stated that Park Board comments would be received, to be passed on to the DAB IV, whose comments in turn would be presented to the City Council who would ultimately make the final selection. He said after that staff would hold public and educational meetings on the project. There was further discussion concerning the possibility of purchasing site #3.

Responding to a question regarding site #1 (north of Pawnee St.), Director Kupper stated that the area was currently being used to store surplus equipment for future City auctions.

Dey asked how far south the proposed site would provide service and whether staff anticipated constructing another site in the future. Mr. Warren referred Dey to a map of the service area. He commented that staff anticipated construction of a treatment plant in the future (probably within ten years) in the vicinity of Brooks Landfill. He stated that the proposed Mid Continent treatment plant would be constructed within the next two years. Aldrich clarified that construction of this facility was critical for expansion of housing and businesses in the area. Mr. Warrant stated that without the facility, the City would probably expand the interceptor sewer at Hoover and 53rd Street South, and issue a moratorium on building in the area. There was discussion concerning whether the satellite location was the best way to handle sewage versus pumping through an interceptor sewer back to another station. Referring back to site #3, Aldrich asked for cost estimates on that site as compared to the other four park locations. Mr. Warren said cost estimates would be provided to the Board.

Miller requested clarification that the four proposed sites were located on land owned by the Board of Park Commissioners, and if that was the case, could the Board stop the process. Staff stated that the sites were located on parcels owned by the Board of Park Commissioners; however, they added that the City had the authority to obtain land through condemnation.

Mr. Warren continued the presentation by referring board members to an aerial of the Cowskin Creek Water Treatment Facility. He pointed out the wetland area, two fishing ponds (stocked by KDWP), riparian woodlands and walking and jogging path. He said there were also plans to construct a shelter and wildlife viewing area. He mentioned that the security fence surrounding the facility had bird and other wildlife sculptures incorporated into the design and that the main building (or “lodge” as it was referred to) had meetings rooms that were available for City and community/neighborhood meetings. He said the entire facility was designed to provide joint use opportunities for recreation and other activities.

President Bailey opened up the discussion for public comment. The following individuals spoke on the issue:

- Allison Hamm – GreenWay Alliance – stated that she wanted to clarify that the land in question is owned by the Board of Park Commissioners so in the legal process they can do more than just comment on the proposal; she further stated that the land the Cowskin Creek Sewage Treatment Plant was located on had never been a park; that Pawnee Prairie Park was a wonderful, natural area and that location of a sewage treatment plant anywhere in the park would completely destroy the sense of what the park was all about; she said location of a sewage treatment plant should be planned along with development the same way other services are planned and not just put in parks; that the City of Wichita has a deficit of parkland and that it is always going to be cheaper to locate these types of facilities on parkland.
- Debra Foster – GreenWay Alliance – questioned the primary criteria. She said that “how a property contributed to the tax rolls” made it sound like other values that property serves to the community, don’t seem to count. She asked if replacement of parkland was included in the project cost estimates. Mr. Warren commented that the committee did discuss additional parkland, but that he did not know if a dollar amount was included in the cost estimates.
- Ellie Skokan - 585 Memphis – said she supported the satellite sewage treatment facility system, but that she did not support the proposed site at Pawnee Prairie Park. She said she has been a Pawnee Prairie Park user for over twenty years; that the Biology Department at WSU uses the park for study purposes; and that the floodway interceptor located in the park has not solved any of the flooding problems. In addition, she stated that site #1 might actually be higher in elevation than site #3.
- David Franks – GreenWay Alliance – stated that there was a deficit of parkland in Wichita and that he was opposed to giving away parkland to accommodate development and developers regardless of the numbers of walking paths and other “lovelies” in the design. He suggested finding the best possible site not located on parkland. He commented on the small park in his neighborhood located at Second and Chautauqua and how the neighborhood was lucky to have that.

- Carol Schlicher – GreenWay Alliance – asked how many gallons a day the plant would treat? Mr. Warren stated that initially, three million gallons a day. Ms. Schlicher commented that the parks belonged to all of the citizens of Wichita and that just because there was no building or playground located in the area didn't mean that it should be developed. She agreed that the City needed sewage treatment plants, but never in parks and that the City needed to stop putting other facilities in parks as well. She said there was a deficit of parkland in Wichita (that the standard was 11 acres per 1,000 population) and that the goal should be 15 acres per 1,000 people. She commented that being a retired nurse she was aware of health issues and that obesity was the number one health problem in the nation and that, conversely speaking, walking and hiking were the number one leisure and exercise activities for most people. She mentioned a treatment plant in Arcadia, CA that developed a joint use area that added to the park system. She passed out an article from the *Kansas City Star* dated March 7, 2004, entitled "Johnson County acts aggressively now to add future parkland". She concluded by asking that the Park Board please protect the parkland the City had and preserve green space for future generations.
- Allison Hamm – GreenWay Alliance - asked about the Land, Water and Conservation Funds (LWCF) that were used at the park. Director Kupper responded that staff was aware of the use of LWCF to develop the horse barn into a nature center. He said staff would be contacting KDWP to see if the proposal had any impact, if the treatment facility ended up on park property.

Brunner asked about site #12. Director Kupper commented that it was located along the Calfskin Creek. Aldrich asked if staff was concerned about building the facility in the flood plain. Mr. Warren stated that the facility could be built in the flood plain, but not the floodway. He said the topography of the site could be adjusted to get above flooding.

Miller asked who developed the selection criteria and how it was developed; was it developed by the by the committee or staff? Mr. Warrant stated that staff developed the criteria and the committee developed the weighting for each criterion.

President Bailey asked about the DAB IV appointees participation on the committee and if anyone had been appointed from DAB V. Mr. Warren stated that three people were appointed to the selection committee from DAB IV; none from DAB V; and that he was not sure of the DAB IV appointees' attendance at the five workshops. President Bailey asked if there was other acreage that could be purchased in the area to complement the park. She specifically asked about site #3. Mr. Warren stated that the site could be purchased or perhaps acquired under the City's right of eminent domain. President Bailey asked if someone from the golf community had been included on the committee. Mr. Warren responded no one other than himself and that he was an avid golfer. President Bailey asked if the facility could be constructed on less than ten acres? There was discussion concerning constructing a pump station off site.

There was brief discussion regarding the number of years before another plant would be needed. Staff estimated that it could be up to thirty years, depending on growth and development. There was also discussion regarding the topography of various sights, based on a gravity system, and the need for lift stations and the drainage basin. Aldrich asked if the property owner of site #3 had been contacted. Mr. Warren explained that would not occur until after the City Council had reviewed the sites and given staff direction.

President Bailey asked about the time frame on the project and why there had to be a special meeting to review the proposal. Mr. Warren stated that the project had been put on hold last year, but that they would like to have a decision on a site some time this year. He said they would like to present it to the DAB IV on August 4 and the City Council on August 17.

Dey commented that it bothered him that the Board did not have any of the data that lead to the ranking of the sixteen sites. Mr. Warren commented that he would provide that data. He added that a community process was involved in the design of the Cowskin Creek Facility.

Miller said she too would be interested in reviewing the site criteria and the data on how the decision was reached. She commended the committee for using criteria; however, she said by using the primary and secondary siting criteria, parkland would always rank the highest. She said in the last few years parks have been used for fire stations, police stations, a school, a water treatment facility, cell towers, sold to a private developer and next month the Board was being asked to consider if a not-for-profit organization could build a training center on parkland. She said she had a real issue with that.

Aldrich said he agreed and stated his preference for site #3, which was located on private property.

Brunner expressed concern that the Board was not involved on the site selection committee and felt like the issue was being brought to the Board after the fact.

Responding to a question from President Bailey, Mr. Warren commented that the City had submitted seven sites to the State for evaluation.

- Allison Hamm – GreenWay Alliance – urged the Park Board to use their authority to send a message and veto the four sites located in Pawnee Prairie Park.

On motion by Miller, second by Brunner, IT WAS VOTED UNANIMOUSLY that the Board did not support any of the four sites located in Pawnee Prairie Park and requested that the selection committee locate another site for the proposed sewage treatment plant not on park property.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:50 p.m.

June Bailey, President

ATTEST:

Maryann Crockett, Clerk
Recording Secretary